

The PREVENTION CONNECTION

NEWSLETTER

Positive Youth Development: *Begin with Positive Adults*

—Jillene Joseph

Positive Youth Development is the latest *buzz* in terms of working with youth. There are the well-researched models such as asset building, the 5 Cs of 4-H programs (Competence, Confidence, Connection, Character, Caring/compassion), the “ables” (disposable, recoverable, preventable, reclaimable, malleable, capable, able) and the wellness model of physical, mental, emotional and spiritual balance coupled with states of belonging, mastery, interdependence and generosity, based on Native values and life ways.

All of these models are excellent and have been used successfully with youth, but they are only as successful as the adults implementing them. In other words, positive youth development begins with positive adults.

People can experience varying degrees of traumatic experiences in childhood and continue to suffer the consequences of the trauma once they become adults. Our upbringing, whether negative or positive, shapes our personalities, including the way we relate to others. Divorce, death, violence, substance abuse, disease, poverty, racism, oppression and war often create unspoken rules in the home such as: *don't*

talk, don't trust, and don't feel. How effective can we be if we grow up with these rules and then find ourselves working with youth?

We must break these rules in order to help the youth we are working with do the same. It is a simple concept, but not easy to do. The healing process can take a long time. The good news is that it can be done.

Positive youth development begins with self-reflection: looking at our behaviors as adults. How well do we communicate? How well do we handle our emotions? How well do we resolve conflict? How well do we take care of our whole self? We have to be in a good space and place before we can implement, advocate, teach and encourage youth to grow into positive contributing members of our communities.

In the late 1970's, amid the Adult Children of Alcoholics (ACOA) movement, Jane Middleton-Moz and Lorie Dwinell identified twenty-one characteristics of adult children of alcoholics or others who experienced trauma as children. (See box on page 2.)

Without personal reflection, acknowledgement and a willingness to do something about any of these characteristics we might exhibit, we carry these issues as baggage wherever we go, including into our work with youth.

Many of us are fortunate to have had mentors to guide us or we have had that *aha* moment when we realize we have some serious work to do on ourselves and in our personal lives. Change is difficult but when we make the decision to begin looking at ourselves, the opportunities for positive growth are unlimited.

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Healthy New Year's Resolutions for Kids Aged 13 and Up

I will:

- eat at least one fruit and one vegetable every day, and limit the amount of soda I drink.
- take care of my body through physical activity and nutrition.
- choose nonviolent television shows and video games, and spend only one to two hours each day—at most—on these activities.
- help out in my community—through volunteering, working with community groups or by joining a group that helps people in need.
- wipe negative “self talk” (i.e. “I can’t do it” or “I’m so dumb”) out of my vocabulary.
- take a break and find constructive ways to deal with stress, such as exercising, reading, writing in a journal or discussing my problem with a parent or friend.
- talk with an adult about my choices when faced with a difficult decision.
- talk with a trusted adult and attempt to find a way that I can help them when my friends are struggling or engaging in risky behaviors.
- be careful about whom I choose to date, and always treat the other person with respect and without coercion or violence.
- resist peer pressure to try drugs and alcohol.
- not use a cell phone or text message while driving and will always use a seat belt.

Source: The American Academy of
Pediatrics

Positive Youth Development *Continued from cover*

Unhealthy behavior is the gift that keeps on giving. Without effort, we will surely pass our behaviors on to the next generation by modeling them. Then youth will repeat the behaviors in their own lives, and with their own children and so the cycle continues. The good news is that when we make positive changes in our lives, the impact on others is also generational.

By taking fear out of the equation, we can make positive changes in our own lives so we can positively impact others, especially our youth. Nobody enjoys interacting with negative people. Yet we must sometimes interact with negative people on a daily basis. Ask yourself: *Am I a negative person? Am I in denial about it? Am I passing this negativity on to the youth with whom I work? How effective can I be?*

To change, we must heal. Healing is a process of becoming whole again. We may cry, scream, go to counseling or therapy, attend church or ceremonies, pray, laugh, write, exercise, go to treatment, participate in support groups, draw, do crafts, help others, talk to others or a combination of any of these things and more. They are all part of the healing process and can help us get better. We may surround ourselves with

positive and supportive people to keep it real. It may take months or even years to thoroughly address our issues and associated behaviors, to find balance. Then we have the rest of our lives to maintain that balance. Life isn’t only about making a living, but rather figuring out how to live, and then living well.

We cannot fully bring out the best in others when we don’t feel it within. Working with youth involves building healthy relationships. In turn, our healthy relationships help bring out the best in each other.

I call my personal mantra *living by the Warrior Spirit*. It calls me to be positive, productive and proactive. We owe it to ourselves, to our youth, and to future generations to heal ourselves and to develop to our fullest potentials so that developing positive youth is not a job, but a natural consequence.

—Jillene Joseph is a member of the Gros Ventre Tribe and Executive Director of the Native Wellness Institute in Gresham, Oregon. For more information, go to nativewellness.com or contact Ms. Joseph at jillene@nativewellness.com or 503-666-7669.

21 Characteristics of Adult Children of Alcoholics and Other Children of Trauma

1. Fear of trusting
2. Continuing sense of guilt
3. Hyper-responsible or chronically irresponsible
4. Perfectionistic
5. Counter-dependent or fear of dependency
6. Need to be in control
7. Difficulty hearing positives
8. Overachievement or underachievement
9. Poor self image
10. Compulsive behaviors
11. Need to be right
12. Denial
13. Fear of conflict and anger
14. Chaos junkies
15. Fear of feeling
16. Frequent periods of depression
17. Fear of intimacy
18. Fear of incompetence
19. Hypersensitivity to the needs of others
20. Repetitive relationship patterns
21. Inability to relax, let go and have fun

Hopa Mountain: *Sharing Resources for Positive Youth Development*

—Bonnie Sachatello-Sawyer, Ed.D.,

This is a very exciting time to be investing in positive youth development. Education leaders, like Geoffrey Canada, President and CEO of the Harlem Children's Zone, have unequivocally shown that intensive, long-term commitment to youth, especially those who are disadvantaged, pays off in adulthood. As parents, educators, and caring community members, we all dream of a brighter future for our children. Now, how do we fully live into this vision to ensure that all youth have the opportunity to reach their full potential?

To start, it is important to raise awareness of common goals for positive youth development. These are:

- Promoting positive relationships with peers;
- Emphasizing strengths;
- Providing opportunities to learn healthy behaviors;
- Connecting youth with caring adults;
- Empowering youth to assume leadership roles in programs; and
- Challenging youth in ways that build their competence.

Research shows that if youth are connected to even one caring adult, they are more likely to complete high school.

"Developing strong bonds with healthy adults and maintaining regular involvement in positive activities not only create a positive developmental pathway, but can prevent the occurrence of problems."

—Catalano, Richard et al., 2002

Creating a shared vision for positive youth development in our communities is vital to realizing these goals. Appreciative Inquiry (AI), a process developed by David Cooperrider, can help in realizing a broad-based community vision for youth. Beginning an AI process in your town begins with discovery.

Discovery: Invite community members (including youth) to talk to each other and

to discover when and where the community engages youth at its best. Uncover what youth, adults and programs that serve youth are already doing well. Hearing positive youth experiences can be energizing.

Dream: Sometimes run as a large community visioning session that includes youth and adults, a leading question in this phase is, *"Describe three hopes for youth in our community."* Individuals' visions will help set the direction for more positive youth development.

Design: Typically, small groups will identify key relationships, examine how their dream overlaps with those of others for positive youth development, and determine activities that need to be realized to achieve the dream.

Deliver/Destiny: With plans in place for positive youth development, individuals can take ownership and begin implementation. In the implementation process, maintaining the group's energy level depends on continuing to maintain a shared sense of destiny for youth. Continue discoveries of new strengths to help your community and youth realize their dreams.

Using Appreciative Inquiry can move communities and existing programs toward more positive youth development, with a focus on supporting long-term social, emotional, behavioral, and cognitive development.

At Hopa Mountain, a Bozeman-based nonprofit, we are using AI to strengthen positive youth development in rural and tribal communities throughout the Northern Rockies. Positive youth programs are core to our mission. With broad-based support, we collaboratively organize year-round youth programs and help rural and tribal citizen leaders launch or improve existing programs.

Hopa Mountain's youth leadership programs in Gallatin and Park Counties offer teens between the ages of twelve and eighteen year-round opportunities to strengthen their leadership skills through positive educational experiences, time outdoors, service learning and personal asset

development. Ongoing activities support teens in becoming agents for positive change in their peer groups, families and communities while gaining valuable life-skills in service to others.

Our youth leadership programs start with week-long summer camps focusing on outdoor experiential challenges, time in nature, individual skill development and service projects. During the school year, youth programs meet weekly. Meetings include time for planning and implementing service projects, team-building activities, leadership development, positive youth mentoring and free time to socialize and build friendships. Teens often lead portions of meetings to practice hands-on leadership and vote on possible activities and projects for the group.

Quarterly service projects are organized and implemented by the teens. In addition, youth participate in educational activities that expose them to new interests and opportunities. Team building sessions strengthen skills such as problem solving, communication, conflict resolution, and decision-making.

If you are interested in starting a youth program in your community, Hopa Mountain staff can help facilitate planning sessions, trainings and provide technical assistance. Hopa's *Youth Program Manual* and *Youth Leaders in Service Community Innovative Guide* are available free of charge at www.hopamountain.org.

—Bonnie Sachatello-Sawyer, Ed.D., is the Executive Director of Hopa Mountain. She can be reached at (406) 586-2455.

Hopa Mountain's youth programs and technical assistance services are made possible with generous support from the O.P. and W.E. Edwards Foundation, the Walter L. Braun and Lucille Braun Family Charitable Gift Fund, the Beim Foundation, the Treacy Company, Learn and Serve America, a program of the National Corporation for Community Service, and the National Science Foundation.

The Park County youth leadership program is offered in cooperation with LINKS for Learning and Yellowstone Country Guardians.

Notes from the Edge: *What Hopa Mountain has Meant to Me*

—Andy Marshall, Youth Program Participant

Thriving

Thriving is a new way to define and understand the dynamics of healthy development. The term is used to complement the language of negative outcomes (e.g., “avoiding alcohol and other drug abuse” and “avoiding teen pregnancy”) that has dominated traditional approaches to prevention.

As the conversation around thriving matures, youth will hear a new vocabulary about why they matter and why their healthy development is crucial for the health and vibrancy of the community. Thriving focuses on how an individual is doing at a given point in time and the path s/he is taking into the future.

Developing sound indicators of thriving will provide:

—communities with a more balanced view of adolescents, their capabilities and contributions;

— alternatives for evaluating success rather than making the case by documenting impact on risk behaviors;

— the basis for conversation about constructive behavior, postures and commitments that societies value and need in youth.

Search Institute has identified 15 markers that assist in quantifying the level of a young person’s thriving. For more information, visit the Search Institute at www.search-institute.org/thriving-and-sparks.

H

opa Mountain has changed my life, and the way I look at it in so many ways. Being part of this program has opened up my way of thinking about the different personalities each of us hold. While they may not be perfect, it is what gives us our shine, our uniqueness. I’ve seen so many people within Hopa Mountain share moments in their lives that meant so much to the people listening. Just listening to the words has helped me understand them a little bit better and strengthened my ability to listen in everyday life.

At this year’s summer camp, we had a tour of up-town Butte, a place that reminded me of how time can pass. The buildings were so old, but thankfully, taken care of.

The places we visited and stayed were beautiful. This year we stayed at Homestake Lodge near Butte. We enjoyed playing games that got us thinking about life. One of the group activities was a scavenger hunt. Learning how to use tools like a compass, and finding points then adapting it to a map was fun and eye opening. This camp is a place that has many warm memories in my heart. Even a small moment can create a big smile within . . . that’s something I believe.

We headed to bed one night and we had an awesome opportunity. Through our windows, our whole room had the chance to see wolves up close. The moment we saw the first, another followed, and another after that. Before we knew it there was a whole pack outside, a sight you very rarely see. Just to see the amazing glint of their eyes was captivating. We were privileged enough to witness this event. It was simply a stroke of luck.

The counselors I worked with were and are very good people. They had the ability to talk with so much power, to communicate with others, sharing words that they believe. The youth I have worked with

have expressed out loud the feelings that I have been so proud to be trusted in. That is one of the advantages to this program in my eyes, learning to express yourself in a way that you believe. And knowing that you need to follow others in some situations is a good skill to have also.

The program activities expand our understanding of life and how we take place in life. Talking about things that you can do to help your community and what you want to do with your future... putting your mind in a position to think about your future, something so simple but something so meaningful, if only you think about it.

Over the years, I have worked with

Hopa Mountain’s summer camps, and have been amazed at how everyone just seems to get along. How they could take all their differences and put them aside. Hopa Mountain has helped me understanding that people have more to show

then just what they present on the outside. In my opinion, if we can do that everywhere, the world would be a better place. The experience with the Hopa Mountain youth programs has been something to remember for the rest of my life.

—Hopa Mountain has helped me understand that people have more to show then just what they present on the outside. In my opinion, if we could do that everywhere, the world would be a better place.

The Vicki Column

The world I live in today looks very different than the one I lived in even a few months ago. My son Andy is twelve, and though I catch glimpses of the little boy he was, suddenly I am also catching glimpses of the man he will become. It's meant learning a whole new set of communication tools. The first and most crucial is *Don't ask too many questions*. It's kind of like playing 20 Questions (well . . . okay . . . on a good day, *seven*). That rule went right out the window the other day when he came home from school. After a long silence, he says, "So. Mom."

"Umm?"

"One of my friends told me his parents said he can't date until he's 16. What do you think about that?"

I thought it sounded great. "I think 16 would be a good for you to start dating, as well."

He nodded and wandered off. Hours passed. Everyone was getting ready for bed when he came again, making another pass through what turned out to be conversational no-man's-land.

"So. Mom. How would you feel if I were to go with a girl?"

"What do you mean, *go with*? Where do you want to go?"

"Nowhere, Mom. I was just thinking about going with a girl."

"To a movie? A dance? Where?"

He rolled his eyes and I should have realized I'd almost hit the end of my allotted questions. "It's not *going* anywhere. It's *going together*."

I understand how important it is to communicate with my children. I get that. I know I need to be sensitive and responsive to the adolescent experience and remember that every adolescent is going through big social and physical changes. The experts say we need to use conversation as an opportunity to keep up with our adolescent's activities and relationships, that we need to stay interested, ask questions and seek explanations gently.

"So," I venture again, trying hard to be interested and gentle, yet responsive. "What does *going together* look like? What do you do?"

"Mom. It's not going . . . it's not doing anything. It's a social status thing. We admit we like each other. Our friends know we're going together. That's it." He's being as patient as he knows how, but I can tell that we're nearing the end. His

eyebrows are turning red and so are his ears.

"Okay," I say, striving to be flexible and to understand his perspective. "Do you know her?"

"Kinda. She's in my homeroom."

"What does this girl like to do?"

"How would I know?"

"So without knowing anything about her, you tell everyone you like her and that you're going together, but you're not going anywhere."

"Yup."

I put my toothbrush away. I reminded myself that his world is different than mine is and was, and that unless his ideas are putting him in danger, it's probably okay. More than okay: it's probably a sign that he's developing as an individual. I tell myself that the most important thing I can do is support him. "Well, maybe you could get her e-mail address and get to know her that way."

He sighs in exasperation. "Maybe. Can I go to bed now?"

"Yes. Sure. Of course. *Please do*."

As his door closes, I wonder how I got in over my head so fast. I'm not even in really deep water here. He's a great kid, he's only 12, he's well grounded and a pretty good communicator, as a rule. But this has been an important lesson. He's changing. The world is changing and I'm changing, too.

What I need to remember as a mom—and as someone who spends her professional time focused on prevention—is that I'm looking through the lenses of my world, a world that often includes worst case scenarios, the end of the line, remediation, intervention, treatment. On the other hand, his lenses are still unclouded and sweet. He's declaring an interest. He's seeing a girl as unique and pretty and interesting, maybe for the first time. "Going together" in his lexicon is just noting that interest and celebrating it. For now, the conversation is over. I follow him into his room and kiss him goodnight, knowing that deeper waters, rougher waters, may be ahead. But for now, life is simple and I just need to remember to ask questions, but not too many questions...to listen, but not to read too much into what I'm hearing, and to be here every day, to the best of my ability. And maybe that's where positive youth development begins.

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Innocent Victims

—Teresa Cowan and Marty Smith

Making Sense of Adolescence: Socrates and the Montana Children's Trust Fund

The Montana Children's Trust Fund (MT CTF) funds programs across Montana that promote positive youth development. Our goals include promoting positive relationships with peers; emphasizing youth's strengths; providing opportunities to learn healthy behaviors; connecting youth with caring adults; empowering youth to assume leadership roles; and challenging youth in ways that build their competence.

The MT CTF helps fund effective, primary prevention programs in local communities, enhancing their capacity to prevent child abuse and neglect. It supports programs that increase knowledge and understanding of child abuse and neglect prevention, which strengthens families and communities and increases positive parenting skills that ensure the health, safety and well-being of children.

When families are supported, children are less likely to be at risk for child maltreatment and more likely to grow up happy and healthy. Community-based, nonprofit organizations are eligible to apply for MT CTF grants.

For more information, visit www.dphhs.mt.gov/cfsd/childrenstrustfund.

In Montana, one of every ten children has a parent involved with the criminal justice system. The Missoula Prerelease Center continues to report that 70 percent of females and 60 percent of males in their facility have children; Billings Women's Prison reports that more than 62 percent of their inmates have children. Children are adversely affected by a parent's incarceration and strengthening these families using a family systems approach helps lessen the impact on children and allows them to continue to develop in a safe, nurturing environment.

This past year, the Parenting Place partnered with the Montana Children's Trust fund to implement a Statewide Family Resource Center for families touched by incarceration. The intent was to help address the myriad issues these families face. With funding from the Trust Fund over the past seven years, we have built a solid foundation of focused work, connections and experience with this population.

In developing the Montana Family Resource Center for families touched by incarceration, we are using a combination of direct service and collaborating partnerships approach, which has been very successful. Our goal is to provide direct services to families while partnering with service providers across the state who can serve families touched by incarceration on a local level in their respective communities. Through support, training, technical assistance and collaboration to benefit our network partners, we are establishing a system of support for families. Continuity and increased networking among entities under the social service system and the criminal justice system enable us to secure the health and well-being of thousands of children across Montana.

The Parenting Place has traditionally provided a combination of home visiting, respite child care, parent education and parent/child visits to a highly underserved population of at-risk families involved in pre-release or probation programs through Missoula Correctional Services. Last year, 52 parents were referred to the Parent Aide Program by Missoula Correctional Services and 80 parents were served by the

parent education component. Nine children utilized our respite care component and seven families participated in meaningful parent/child visits. We also served 33 families in which either a parent or a child were experiencing a disability. These families were from all regions of Montana, and together represented 18 counties.

The geographic diversity of the families served left our agency with limited options for connecting individual families with support systems in their hometowns. Many rural areas have no services and even some of the more urban areas have few resources to assist families with re-entry. Part of our effort to build consistent systems of parent education and support across Montana is for the purpose of creating similar environments for families to re-enter—no matter where home may be.

The issue that continues to be raised among service providers is that families returning to isolated communities after parental incarceration lack the supportive services they need to be successful. Services such as home visiting, parent education and respite childcare are often scarce. Even when services *are* available, families and service providers alike report that staff are often ill equipped to deal with the challenges faced by families whose lives are touched by incarceration.

The good news is, there are programs in Montana that have the expertise needed to remedy this situation, and the Montana Family Resource Center for families touched by incarceration has begun to bring them together to share information and become part of a support system for families at one of the most critical times in their lives. The stresses associated with community and family reintegration can increase the risk of child abuse and neglect. Parents who leave correctional facilities face many challenges – finding or resuming employment, financial pressures, establishing housing, and dealing with friends and family.

The Montana Children's Trust Fund Statewide Family Resource Center provides support and advocacy for these families and gives hope to the innocent victims, the children throughout Montana who are touched by incarceration.

For more information, visit www.parentingplace.net.

Second Chance Homes

—Holly Nault Pullar



According to the National Institute on Alcohol and Alcoholism, children of people with alcoholism are about four times more likely than the general population to develop alcohol dependence. Studies also indicate that children of people who misuse drugs are at greater risk of developing addictions themselves. Environmental factors can also contribute; when this happens, children often suffer abuse and neglect as a result of a parental addiction. At that point, governmental agencies may become involved and remove children from their homes to ensure their safety.

Second Chance Homes (SCH) want to keep families together and to provide them with the tools to address the addiction together. Parents are required to be in treatment as long as they are clients at the Second Chance Homes. The program has five phases that take between six and eighteen months to complete. The program is tailored to the individual. Whether or not the Department of Child and Family Services has removed the child(ren) determines the level of supervision for families. SCH provides 24-hour staffing in their Main House Program, allowing faster reunification because children's safety and well-being are monitored.

Supportive Housing is an option for families that do not need intensive supervision but do need ongoing support. The new component, Supportive Transitional Living (STL), is currently being developed. STL is for those who have progressed further in the recovery process and are just waiting for housing to be reunified with their children. SCH will help these families secure permanent housing.

All three SCH programs include case management and other wraparound services, as needed. The areas where parents with addictions and their child(ren) need assistance are determined at the beginning of the program and assessed throughout their stay. Parents with addictions are connected with community resources that offer life skills training in addition to the skills taught in treatment. Some life skills include vocational training and/or further education, time management, credit counseling, parenting and healthy cooking on a budget.

Regardless of how parents fare in treatment, SCH recognizes that children continue to develop and grow. Therefore, SCH works with children in areas that fall within the cognitive, physical, social, emotional, fine motor and gross motor skills domains. SCH's children's programming uses such evidenced-based curriculums as *Kelly Bear* and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Substance and Mental Health Services Administration's *Children's Program*. They soon will be adding the *Incredible Years* to round out their programming.

Children who have learned to deal with their emotions and are on track developmentally are easier to parent. If a parent cannot make the changes needed to become a safe parent, children are ready for alternate permanency options such as guardianship and/or adoption.

Addiction is a factor in the lives of these children. SCH uses age-appropriate information to explain the disease rather than the old way of telling them that their parents are "sick" and unsafe to parent them. Children may believe that they will be sent away if their foster parents become "sick" because that means they are unsafe, according to Dr. Brenda Roche, SCH Program Evaluator. Accurate information gives children words for what they have seen and heard and allows them to understand why their parents are going through treatment.

Part of treatment with the SCH Main House and Supportive Housing programs includes having multiple families live together. Families figure out how to get along, problem-solve and support one another. Children observe adult interactions, including sharing and conflict resolution. Younger children learn from the older ones and the older ones learn to be role models, stated Dr. Roche.

Parents and children alike learn about relationship building. These relationships change as people graduate and move out, but children and their parents learn to accept these losses in a supportive environment. They see these friends at the ongoing recreational outings that SCH hosts a couple of times a month for current families and graduates. Besides the opportunity

to socialize, they provide hope for SCH residents by allowing them to see that it is possible to make a life after treatment. These outings are part of SCH's commitment to serving as a resource for families after they have completed their treatment obligations.

—The Second Chance Homes are just finishing their second year. Findings will be posted on its website, www.sch-mt.org, in mid January 2010. For more information, contact Dr. Brenda Roche, SCH Program Evaluator at 406-294-9510 or brenda@arrowheadpbs.com or Donna Huston, Program Director at 406-294-5092 or donna@sch-mt.org.

"The best prevention for kids is good treatment for parents."

—Dr. Brenda Roche

Great Resources

Appreciative Inquiry

<http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/>

Developmental Asset Lists for Youth

<http://www.search-institute.org/developmental-assets/lists>

National Indian Youth Leadership Project

<http://www.niylp.org/>

Positive Youth Development

<http://www.ncfy.com/pyd/>

Service-Learning

<http://www.servicelearning.org/>

TakingITGlobal

<http://www.tigweb.org/>

Summer Employment: *Helping Build Successful Youth*

—Connie Kinsey

SAFE TEEN DRIVERS

Teen Driver Safety Resources

Montana GDL – Graduated Driver License
www.opi.mt.gov/gdl

CDC Parents are the Key
<http://www.cdc.gov/ParentsAreTheKey>

Keeping Young Drivers Safe - Children's Hospital of Philadelphia
<http://www.chop.edu/youngdrivers>

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration - Teen Drivers
<http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/>

More Great Resources

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC); Parents are the Key to Safe Teen Driving (2009). On the Web: www.cdc.gov/parentarethekey

Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) Young Driver Research (2009)
On the Web: www.research.chop.edu/programs/youngdriver/docs/SetHouseRules.pdf

Montana Department of Transportation Statistics, Alcohol Crash Data.

On the Web: <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/publications/datastats>

In February 2009, when President Obama signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), youth workforce practitioners nationwide were excited. For the first time in a decade, funding had been set aside specifically for a summer youth program. There had not been summer youth program funding since implementation of the Workforce Investment Act, ten years ago. Montana has ten youth service providers, and each of them began enrolling youth in the ARRA Summer Youth Employment Program in May 2009. Together, they placed 555 youth between the ages of 14 and 24 in summer work experiences. ARRA eligibility requirements are the same as those for the Workforce Investment Act. This means that youth enrolled in the ARRA summer employment program were experiencing barriers such as homelessness, foster care, pregnancy or parenting, high-school dropout, legal system involvement, low-income or disabilities.

The ARRA Summer Employment Program created many opportunities. Youth were placed in a variety of worksites—public schools, hospitals and assisted living facilities, Boys and Girls Clubs, daycare centers, weatherization, health care facilities, city and county occupations, Chambers of Commerce, flower shops and recycling centers. Occupations included animal caretakers, maintenance helpers, stock clerks, sales clerks, an audio technician, a green house/insectory technician, recreation and activities aides, office workers in public agencies, painters, plumbers helpers, a bindery worker, and weatherization/restoration workers. For some, the only success they've known in their lives have been through summer work experiences. This work has helped them connect . . . whether to the job, a supervisor or a case manager.

Summer employment programs proved successful for many youth who participated in the program. The younger youth returned to school in September, and about 44 older youth already out of school have been permanently hired by their work

experience worksites or other employers as a result of the skills and experience acquired in the summer employment experience. The majority of youth were hired into full-time positions. Some of these permanent jobs would have been impossible for these youth to access without any relevant experience or very limited workplace experience, particularly when the lack of experience is coupled with personal challenges.

One youth was an offender and the parent of two young children. During enrollment, he let everyone know that he was interested in learning a trade. He was matched with one of the Weatherization programs. When a Weatherization Tech position opened, this youth applied. Even though he had a criminal background, his excellent performance over the summer and his demonstrated dependability helped him get the job. He is now making \$14 an hour, plus benefits.

Other examples include a youth whose work experience was in a healthcare worksite. This young person now plans to start a post secondary education in January to further an education toward a healthcare career. Several first-year college students had exposure that helped them learn there's much more out there than minimum wages in the fast food industry.

Youth are a work in progress and while some kids make the most of the opportunity in a short period of time, others take more time and more investment. There is no substitute for paid work experience. Not only does it provide hands-on, experiential training, but great worksites mentor youth and the wages allow them to participate in the local economy. Positive work experiences lead youth to believe that they *can* be successful . . . and suddenly they can begin to believe their careers are just beginning. That's priceless.

—Connie Kinsey is the Program Manager for the Statewide workforce Programs and Oversight Bureau. She can be reached at 406-444-4571 or ckinsey@mt.gov. For more information about the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act in Montana, visit www.recovery.mt.gov.

Risky Driving and Teens

—Fran Penner-Ray and David Huff

T

—Parents hold the keys to raising safe, competent teen drivers. The safe driving challenge is to change attitudes and behavior.

Teen drivers have little experience dealing with darkness, speed, icy roads, fatigue, passengers and complex traffic at intersections. Athletes, musicians and coaches recognize guided practice is critical to improving performance. Newly licensed drivers are still rookies who need 1,000 miles or more of experience on various roads—in all kinds of weather—to build competence and learn to navigate safely.

Start the conversation about safe driving and responsible passenger behavior early. Ask, *What is helpful to a driver?* and *What is distracting and dangerous?* Create clear rules and expectations for your teen around driving and riding, whether they are a passenger or a driver. Insist on seatbelts for everyone, on every trip. Set a good example and let voice mail take your cell phone calls when you are driving. Make sure teens understand the Graduated Driver License and that your family's rules are about safety rather than control.

Montana's Graduated Driver License (GDL), effective in 2006, requires parent/legal guardian supervision for at least six months, with 50 hours of supervised practice that include ten hours of night driving. Teens seldom crash when they are driving with parents, but independent driving changes all that. A teen's greatest lifetime chance of crashing occurs in the first six to twelve months after receiving a driver license.

During the first year of independent driving, GDL restrictions are designed to limit the risk imposed by having teen passengers and driving in darkness. Nearly two out of three teen crash deaths involving 16-year-old drivers happen when a new driver has one or more teen passengers, and teen crash risk doubles with each additional passenger. Montana's GDL allows one passenger during the first six months and up to three during the next six months, but best practices are zero passengers until teens are more skilled. Nighttime crash rates for 16 year olds are nearly twice as high as

daytime rates. The GDL limits teen driving from 11:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m., but darkness that limits vision and hazard recognition is the real risk.

Researchers have found teens drive like their parents when they check traffic citations. So who speeds, talks on the cell phone and runs red lights?

Professional instruction makes a difference. Results from research in Texas and Oregon found teens whose parents chose to enroll them in state-approved driver education classes have fewer citations and serious crashes.

Teens are aware of the risks of texting and driving, but their social connections are strong. Teens reflexively answer text messages even if their feet don't reflexively go to the brakes when they see a red light. Researchers who track driver eye movements with cameras and driver simulators find that people take their eyes off the road, often for periods long enough to drive the length of a football field.

Car crashes, the number one killer of teens, continue to take over 4,000 young lives each year.

Montana has one of the highest alcohol-related fatality rates in the nation per vehicle mile traveled. Teens from Montana's high schools who participated in the 2009 Youth

Risk Behavior Survey reported that:

- 28.8% had ridden in a car driven by someone who had been drinking alcohol during the past 30 days; and
- 13.5% had driven a car when they had been drinking alcohol during the past 30 days.

Underage drinking can affect anyone, including people who don't drink. Strictly enforce zero tolerance for alcohol and impaired driving—whether or not your teen driver is caught by law enforcement. Parents control the keys and can ask the state to pull a teen's license. Work with your teen on drafting and signing a parent-teen driving agreement to set family limits and consequences.

Why set limits? Inexperience, risk taking and inattention are a deadly combination for teen drivers. When teens have to ask to borrow the car, parents can help with trip planning, resisting peer pressure and remind them of the family rules. Honor their independence and reward teens for responsibility with increased privileges. Supportive limits and high expectations for your teen will help them through that first dangerous stage of independent driving.

—Fran Penner-Ray and David Huff work for the Montana Office of Public Instruction Traffic Education Program. For more information, visit <http://opi.mt.gov/DRIVERED/> or contact David Huff, Director, at 406-444-4396 (dhuff@mt.gov) or Fran Penner-Ray, Program Specialist, at 406-444-4432 or fpenner-ray@mt.gov.

SAFE TEEN DRIVERS

What Can Parents Do?

- Be a role model for safe and smart driving
- Enroll your teen in Driver Education
- Set family driving rules, limits and consequences
- Know Montana's Graduated Driver License Law
- Supervise teen driving even after they get licensed
- Practice – practice – practice!

Mama Says

—Pete Bruno

M

ama Says was a national survey of 1,533 American mothers, aged 18 and older, completed in late 2008. The survey asked a series of questions concerning attitudes about fatherhood and the parenting performance of fathers, and was conducted by the National Fatherhood Initiative.

Nearly all of the mothers surveyed (93%) said that there *is* a serious absent-father crisis in our country. This is very similar to the response received from fathers in a parallel survey (91%). A majority of the mothers surveyed agreed that a mother or another man could serve as an adequate substitute for an absent or uninvolved father, but it was not clear from the survey results whether they believed finding an adequate substitute for fathers was common, or even likely.

A majority of moms who responded to the survey reported that they could use more support to achieve a better work-family balance. The men who were living with the mothers responding to the survey received significantly high marks—those who were not living with the family received extremely negative scores. Dads who had taken on new replacement relationships received the lowest marks of all. Regardless of the living arrangement, dads who were perceived as being close to their children and good at balancing work and family received the highest satisfaction ratings. Strong religious beliefs, values and

commitments are all conducive to good fathering in *any* living arrangement.

Not oddly, married moms were happier with fathers' performance than were unmarried, cohabitating and divorced moms. Married moms believe that marriage has the power to help dads be the best they can be. Respondents found work responsibilities to be the number one obstacle to good fathering, followed by a man's poor relationship with his own father, and lack of knowledge about *how* to be a good father. The fathers of young children received significantly higher ratings than did the fathers of teens. Dads who lived with the moms rated themselves as the moms did, but generally dads living apart rated themselves much higher than their co-parents did.

As was the case when I collaborated with the Family Research Center in benchmark marriage research in 1999, even among the non-religious, mothers rated the church and other communities of faith as the number one resource that could help fathers become better dads. The second resource identified was schools, followed by community-based organizations.

Most of the mothers surveyed (68%) felt that men are generally unprepared for fatherhood; only 12 percent indicated that they believed men are well-prepared. Since non-resident men generally over-rated their preparedness for and participation in positive parenting, the report stated that there is almost certainly an even greater need for preparing men for fatherhood than previous data indicate.

It is not surprising that a very large percentage of the mothers who responded to the survey agreed that they were a positive influence on the ability of the father to be a good dad. Most who failed to agree were not living with the father of the child, but 69 percent of those mothers agreed that they were a positive influence. More than half (58%) of the not-living-with-mother fathers sampled by the parallel *Pop's Culture Survey* said that the mothers were an obstacle to their own good parenting. Clearly, there appear to be many instances where parents who do not live together

disagree about the nature of the mother's influence.

For those concerned with positive youth development, this new data strongly supports the need for fatherhood education *before* fatherhood occurs. Programs that promote multiple types of positive parenting practices (developmental, educational, social-emotional and non-abusive discipline styles) must make a concerted effort to reach men—not just those in social-legal trouble, but *all* men, at or just before the birth of their children. For the totally unprepared man, such a social expectation would prevent misery and significant amounts of abuse, especially as perpetrated by young men. For the 32 percent of men rated as *somewhat* prepared, such a social expectation would strengthen the family and enhance skills—thus exerting a preventative impact as more and more dads learned to *do it right*.

There is also an identified need for fatherhood programs that prevent child abuse to connect with church and community-based faith organizations, perhaps through outreach sessions. For those to whom this is a new idea, make a friend of

a minister and discuss how to do this on a city- or county-wide basis, then go to a ministerial association meeting as a guest.

I guarantee that

there will be at least one minister who likes the idea and will partner with you in getting into at least one church—generally one of the ones known for marriage and family support.

I know. I just did.

—Pete Bruno is a retired LCPC who teaches parenting four times a week at the local Dawson County Healthy Communities Parent Resource Center in Glendive. He is currently mentoring four other resource programs in eastern Montana for the Montana Children's Trust Fund. Mr. Bruno he has won five awards for program design and is willing to advise other Montanans about prevention program start-up. For more information, contact Pete at weparent@midrivers.com or 406.377.7515.

For more information about the Mama Says Survey, visit www.fatherhood.org/mamasays.

According to mothers, fatherhood remains a core component of positive youth development.

Honor Your Life, Honor Your Ancestors

—Don Wetzel, Jr. and Stephanie Iron Shooter

—Honor your life, honor your ancestors is the theme of the Montana Wyoming Tribal Leaders Council Planting Seeds of Hope Tribal Youth Suicide Prevention Project.

Listening is empowering to youth . . . respecting youth as we ask them to respect us. They have a voice, they have the knowledge and skills to be involved in all we do. We want to give them the power to make their voices heard. We want to link them to their culture and their history. We want to discuss historical trauma with them to emphasize the resiliency of our people, the strength that they have running through their veins.

We will focus on community strengths. Basketball is one of them. We want to identify reservation heroes, recognize these heroes from our PSOH offices and bring them to the forefront in their communities to speak to youth. We are putting together a Speaker's Bureau to bring people forward to speak to youth on their experiences, to talk about how they have made it through challenges, abuse and racism that they have experienced with being from the reservation. These ambassadors, by having a strong cultural identity and understanding of who they are and who they represent, are willing to speak to youth and to address the importance of academics, commitment, belief in self and native culture.

We will develop life skills basketball camps covering everything from relationships to the significance of culture. Through these camps, we will link the ideals of basketball to the challenges of everyday life through the importance of teamwork, self-confidence and cultural strength. We want the youths' input and we want to include them in activities during the down times. The key is finding committed people on the reservations. We want to link youth to resources that often miss the reservations, for no specific reason other than miscommunication. We want to link to national programs as well. We want to set up programs where youth attend events they usually never see on reservations.

I have spoken to youth and they often tell me, *everyone tells us what to do, they*

never ask us what to do. We have to use actions, not just words with these youth today. They have been let down so many times, it has come to seem normal to them. We have to give them hope because they are our hope. We have to help them understand the chain of hopelessness running through our reservations and how they can break that chain.

Many youth receive no recognition, no positive communication. Native youth are

We have to use actions, not just words with these youth today. They have been let down so many times, it has come to seem normal to them. We have to give them hope because they are our hope.

the strongest, most able, talented, athletic, intelligent kids around. Look at the two things they focus on: basketball and running. They dominate those sports in Montana.

They need to hear us when we tell them that if they focused on academics, science, engineering as they do these sports, they would dominate them as well.

—Don Wetzel Jr. is the Project Director for the Planting Seeds of Hope Tribal Youth Suicide Prevention Project and Stephanie Iron Shooter is the Project Coordinator. They can be reached at the Montana Wyoming Tribal Leaders Council at 406-252-2550 or visit them online at <http://www.mtwytlc.com/>.

Sparks

The Search Institute's Thriving and Sparks model defines a spark is an interest, talent, skill, asset, or dream that excites a young person. Sparks allow the individual to discover his or her true passions, whether academic, relational, athletic, artistic or intellectual.

Sparks inspire and motivate. They light a fire. But sparks, by themselves, can go out if they are not nurtured with enough fuel to keep them alive and to strengthen them. This fuel comes in the form of supportive peers and adults who help celebrate, affirm and grow a young person's sparks. They are essential if sparks are to help the young person thrive. Sparks give young people joy and energy, meaning, purpose, and direction. Pursuing them helps young people make positive choices, develop their potential and contribute.

—Visit www.ignitesparks.com to find more information on sparks and how you can help youth find them.

The opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of the Prevention Resource Center and the Addictive and Mental Disorders Division of the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services.

The Prevention Resource Center and the Addictive and Mental Disorders Division of the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services attempt to provide reasonable accommodations for any known disability that may interfere with a person participating in this service. Alternative accessible formats of this document will be provided upon request. For more information, call AMDD at (406) 444-3964 or the Prevention Resource Center at (406) 444-3484.

Do the Write Thing

—Casey Driscoll

Excerpts from DTWT entries . . .

*"I walk this tiny world each day
with a smile that convinces
everyone I'm ok.*

*Sometimes I wish that someone
knew the truth*

*if someone could see that I'm
slowly drifting away."*

—8th Grade Student, Great Falls

*"So, what CAN we do? Many people
think, "Oh, there's nothing I can do. I
can't make a difference in his life." Or
"It's not my job to help her. I'm too busy,
someone else will help her." Well, the
sad truth is, if you don't, who will?"*

—8th Grade Student, Helena

*"I go to the store to buy a play
station game,*

*They say I have to be seventeen
and I think that's lame,*

*Because I can turn on the
T.V. any time of day*

*And see the same thing they're
afraid I'll play."*

—7th Grade Student, Reed Point

*"We can also keep ourselves out of
troubles way by not being rude and
showing respect to everyone we know.
It's hard to do though; it will take will
power. I can't say it will always work,
but it won't hurt to give it a try."*

—8th Grade Student, Reed Point

*"You shout
To have them hear
They do not listen
But you have made the difference
with your voice"*

—8th Grade Student, Missoula

The *Do the Write Thing Challenge* is an initiative of the National Campaign to Stop Violence (NCSV) funded by the Youth Justice Council of the Montana Board of Crime Control. The Challenge is an opportunity for 7th and 8th grade students to examine how youth violence impacts their lives, the causes of youth violence, and asks youth to determine what they can personally do to reduce youth violence. Teachers are encouraged to have classroom discussions. Following the discussions, students are asked to write an essay, poem, play, or other written expression voicing their feelings and thoughts about violence.

Professionals in the juvenile justice field read student submissions and select ten exceptional writings. Five boys and five girls are invited to a celebration at the State Capitol where they read their writings and are honored for their courage in accepting the Challenge. At this banquet, the names of a boy and girl whose writings were chosen as the most thought-provoking are announced. These two students, their teachers, and one parent or guardian, are invited to participate in the *Do the Write Thing National Recognition Week* activities in Washington, D.C. in July. Throughout the week, students are able to engage in conversations with youth from around the country about the impact of youth violence on their lives. The students are honored at a reception at the Embassy of Kuwait, meet with members of Congress, and have their writings bound and placed in the Library of Congress.

The *Do the Write Thing Challenge* can be applied in a number of venues. Teachers can use the Challenge to gain knowledge of their school's climate and as an opportunity to discuss personal safety and the well-being of others. Courts and Juvenile Probation Officers can assign it as part of a diversion or disposition. Parents can use the writings to gain insight into their child's world.

The Challenge gives students an opportunity to engage in classroom discussion about the causes of violence and to write about their experiences. It gives youth the opportunity to express their feelings and thoughts through writing and lets

them know that adults are listening and want to hear from them. The Challenge can also be helpful in identifying youth who need to be connected to their community through services such as mentoring and afterschool programs. One unique aspect of this program is that entries must be submitted in the form that they are received from the student writer. Editing for content, grammar, or spelling by anyone other than the student is not permitted. This helps create an environment where the students' words are not influenced by adult perception and suggestion. Youth are free to use their own voice and have their thoughts and ideas surrounding youth violence validated.

Founded in 1996, the National Campaign to Stop Violence (NCSV) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization comprised of business, community and governmental leaders who have come together to reduce violence in homes, schools and neighborhoods across the U.S. It is funded primarily by the Kuwait-America Foundation, along with a broad coalition of other organizations. The nonprofit operates in 31 cities and 17 states, including the District of Columbia. Since inception, nearly one million students have participated in classroom discussions about violence and ways to control violence. The organization has published over 100 collections of essays from students with 13 volumes housed at the Library of Congress.

—Casey Driscoll works for the Montana Board of Crime Control. She can be reached at 406-444-3689 or cdriscoll@mt.gov. For more information on the national program, visit www.dtwt.org/.

Do the Write Thing National Finalist Essays

An excerpt from . . .

Mission Impossible?

—Leah Heffelfinger - 8th Grade
Montana City School
Teacher, Jane Erickson

. . . Let me tell you a story, a story about one of my close friends. He's into drugs, drinking, and cutting. His parent's aren't there for him, and he moved into my school from a very bad environment. So, I had a party once, and I decided to take him along. My friend rode in the car with my father, and they were just talking about everything that has happened to him. And then my friend turned to my dad and said, "Thank you for letting me come. Adults and parents usually shy away from me, because of everything that I have done and been through. So thank you." And want to know what my dad said? My father turned to him, and looked him straight in the eye and told him "Son, I don't care about what you were, I care about what you are." Seems simple doesn't it? A small sentence, a conversation in a car, yet that one small sentence meant the world to my friend. It's simple, small things like what my father did that help prevent school shootings, troubled teens, and youth violence. If America would just wake up and open their eyes, they would be able to have some impact on some youth in need. you can't fix a problem by ignoring it, you fix a problem by trying, looking for a way to help. In this essay you told me to answer questions regarding youth violence. And now I ask all readers my own questions. If not you, who? If not now, when? Will you choose to open your eyes, or stay blind to these pressing issues? We all have the power to prevent these horrible acts of youth violence. It is up to us, everyday people like you and me, people in the class room, in the home, on the streets, a person passing a group of kids beating up one innocent teen, it is up to us to solve this problem of youth violence. America has a long way to go, but if our school's have support programs, if we can get parenting classes more available and affordable for parents, if we can just be there and pull together, then America can make it.

Violence Surrounds Us All

—Quentin Poole – 7th Grade
Reed Point School
Teacher, Linda Hedstrom

1. How does violence affect your daily life?

I go to the store to buy a play station game,
They say I have to be seventeen
and I think that's lame,
Because I can turn on the T.V.
anytime of day
And see the same thing they're
afraid I'll play.
Because violence is everywhere so
it seems,
I hope it doesn't get to me except in
my dreams.



2. Where are you confronted by violence?

On the city streets
Be careful of who you meet.
There are drugs, gangs and thugs,
If you meet up with them you may have to run.
Gun shots fired in the school
It turned out the bullies wanted to rule.

3. What are some of the causes of youth violence in your community?

No one to talk to
But his friends,
The way it started
Was the way it ends.
Drugs to try just for fun
Left him dying all alone.
Bullies hitting you for no reason at all.
Makes you want to cry your eyes out
and just bawl.
Fitting in is not simple
Especially if you have a pimple.
Being young is hard to do
Especially if no one accepts you.



4. What can you do as an individual to reduce youth violence in your community?

I could start young and strong
And always know my rights from my wrongs.
If someone is having a bad day
Because of a school bully
I would know just what to say
And help him understand fully
That is has nothing to do with you
Bullies just like to see you blue.
Come join me and we will stop the
madness.
Everyone will be happy and there'll
be no more sadness.
I would teach little kids what not to do,
And set an example of kindness, too.

Girls Only

Girl-only groups have been shown to help girls develop the confidence and skills that help them aspire to, and succeed in, challenging careers

Research suggests that we continue to confront a cultural problem, namely, that girls, boys, parents, teachers, and the general public assume that math, science, technology and engineering are intellectually out of reach and inappropriate for girls and women.

While girls consistently demonstrate an aptitude for math and science, research has shown that girls' interest in math and science is often implicitly or explicitly discouraged. Gender gaps in interest, confidence and performance, particularly in the physical sciences, begin to emerge in the late elementary and middle school years. In high school and higher education, the under representation of young women in computing, physics and engineering is especially alarming. The percentage of girls who say they like science declines from 4th grade (66%) to 8th grade (47%) to 12th grades (48%)

Skills in math and science will be increasingly important for self-sufficiency, as a technology-driven economy increasingly demands an educated and globally competitive workforce. The fastest growing economic clusters in our region include biotechnology (biomedicine), information technology, environmental technology and to some extent advanced manufacturing. All depend on a workforce skilled in math and science.

Girls for a Change

—Vanessa Skelton



—Girls for a Change opened my eyes to the girl I was and the woman I could become.

Since I was a young girl, I've dreamed big. My mission has been to make the world a better place, and I've been dedicated to that mission. Yet even as recently as two years ago, I was still seeking the confidence I needed. *Girls for a Change* opened my eyes to the girl I was and the woman I could become. In meeting other girls who shared my aspirations, my confidence slowly grew and my feeling of self worth increased dramatically. In the eyes of the girls I met, I did not feel like the shy, quiet girl everyone saw. Without those limitations, I found room to grow and become a friend and mentor . . . a person whose opinion mattered. *Girls for a Change* has given me the tools to grow, teach and achieve my goals. By helping other girls grow as I have, I feel as though my goals are starting to be realized.

Girls for a Change (GFAC), a signature program of *Thrive*, is a grassroots initiative founded in 1997 by girls and their mentors. Its mission is to provide a spectrum of supports that empower and motivate girls in middle- and high-school to embrace their futures confident in their individuality, supported by friends, parents and mentors and secure in their ability to lead and achieve self sufficiency, fulfillment and success. Since 1997, GFAC has grown into a committee of twenty girls and eight women, all dedicated to and passionate about encouraging women and girls to become more confident and fulfilling lives.

It is not just the mission that makes GFAC great. It's the embodiment of that mission. It's the way it plays out in everyday lives. In the past, the program was primarily dedicated to creating a conference by girls, for girls. More recently, the group has spread into other areas of community service and international relations. GFAC prepares girls to lead self-sufficient lives by offering a variety of opportunities. The program involves girls in the hands-on planning and coordinating of a professional statewide conference and other activities. Being part of this process provides concrete, realistic and long-lasting skills. GFAC offers girls the opportunity to have their voices heard by putting them

in positions where they can be decision makers who determine the conference focus, workshops and speakers.

GFAC provides a forum for Montana girls of all backgrounds to gain awareness and understanding of the complex issues affecting their lives and those of girls and women from around the globe. This fall, representatives from our group met with seven girls from Algeria and a group from Bangladesh to discuss cultural issues that included youth and poverty.

The core committee assesses community needs and offers solutions for meeting those needs through community service projects. Recent service activities have included cleaning trails and planting a pollinator garden with Gallatin Valley Land Trust, and helping raise funds for the Ugandan Orphans by selling their handmade rolled paper necklaces. *Girls for a Change* is looking to expand even further.

The 2010 girl's conference is called, "Live Out Loud." The keynote speaker will be Stephanie Quayle and all Montana girls from 8th – 12th grades are invited to join us for a day of workshops centered around international culture, self expression, community service, arts, movement and being green. Last year, 149 girls from 26 communities attended the conference and most (83%) left feeling they had "a better understanding of and more confidence in my strengths and abilities." The GFAC organization is helping Montana girls realize their full potential, and through girls, is working to make the Montana community an even better place to live.

—For more information, contact Vanessa Skelton at Thrive at 406.587.3840 or gfac@allthrive.org. You can also visit the website at www.allthrive.org/programs/girls-for-a-change/.

Want a Stronger Community? Empower Girls!

—Liz Gundersen and Christine Thennis

Do girls like science and sports? You bet!

Then why are the ExWorks Robotics Classes filled mostly with boys? And why is participation in the local mountain-biking program mostly boys?

These questions are being asked and researched across the country. The answers are leading to programs designed especially for girls.

ExWorks staff teacher Liz Gundersen and 5th grade teacher and volunteer Sandy Jones have been working with girls in a technology-based girls club for seven years. Kathleen Harrington, then Helena YWCA Director, worked with several women from the community and AmeriCorps TechCorps volunteers to launch the Helena YWCA TechGyrls program in Fall 2003. The program was based on four guiding principles:

1. the group would consist only of girls, meeting weekly as a girls club;
2. the activity emphasis would be on science, technology, and robotics;
3. the group would be led by women volunteers and strong female role models; and
4. the girls would study the lives of famous women in science, and take field trips to see local women working in technology and leadership positions.

After meeting in the YWCA basement and at the Helena Housing authority, the group ultimately became associated with *ExplorationWorks* as *ExWorks Girl-Tech*. Over the previous six years, more than ninety girls have participated. This year, twenty-two fifth-grade girls from several Helena schools have been selected by their teachers as good candidates to take advantage of this program, which builds self-confidence and inspires curiosity in a curriculum that teaches how to build electrical circuits into art projects, program robots, and design animations in the computer-based Scratch program.

The effectiveness of the program shows in several ways. One former student and her family have formed a team and participated for three years in the

FIRST Robotics Competitions in Bozeman. Another former student is currently a volunteer mentor. Other volunteers have come from Carroll College and the community of local women who are interested in science and wish to inspire young women to succeed. One VISTA high school volunteer is now a pre-med student at the University of Rochester, and is teaching science classes of her own at ExWorks during breaks. Grants from the Women's Foundation of Montana and Helena Soroptimists have supported the *Girl-Tech* program, and the activities taught in classes have been incorporated into out-of-school classes during the year and in summer-time, available to all boys and girls.

Christine Thennis, *ExWorks* Program Coordinator, is interested in engaging middle-school girls in a new after-school sports program. She began thinking about a girl's mountain biking program after going on a hike with her niece, Riley. Riley counted the number of mountain bikers riding up and down Mount Ascension. When they reached the parking lot, Riley asked, "Why are there only boy mountain bikers?" Christine told her that there *are* women and girls out there, but that there *definitely* should be more.

Christine contacted Suzanne Bessette, who was working on starting a similar program with running as the sport. Working together, the ideas morphed into plans for a girl's sports program, due to start this fall as the *Helena Girls in Sports Program*. They want to instill in middle-school aged girls certain lessons and values they might not hear enough of—like self-respect, healthy body image, and what it means to be part of a team and a community. They'll teach these lessons through sports training (running and mountain biking). Through participation in sports, girls learn to appreciate their bodies for what they can do, instead of focusing on how they look. Learning and training as a group also helps girls trust and rely on themselves and their teammates while learning to work toward common goals. The program will rely on equipment donations, local fund-raising, and grants and donations from national foundations and other organizations to access equipment and supplies as needed.

This program provides lessons in teamwork and leadership, the development of citizenship, and community involvement for the young women of the Helena area. Healthy communities develop healthy youth who believe in and respect themselves and their peers, while learning the value of contributing through cooperative engagement, being the recipient of the community's caring and generosity, experience with positive role models, and involvement in innovative programs and activities.

—If you are interested in learning more about innovative programs for young women in Helena, contact Exploration Works Science Educator Liz Gundersen or Program Coordinator Christine Thennis. Visit the Exploration Works website at www.explorationworks.org or call 406.457.1800.

The Women's Sports Foundation has a comprehensive 2004 report synthesizing the research on the connection between participation in sports and girls' physical, emotional, and educational well-being. It includes the following:

- High school girls who play sports are less likely to be involved in an unintended pregnancy; more likely to get better grades in school and more likely to graduate than girls who do not play sports.
- As little as four hours of exercise a week may reduce a teenage girl's risk of breast cancer by up to 60%; breast cancer is a disease that afflicts one out of every eight American women. (*Journal of the National Cancer Institute*, 1994)
- Girls and women who play sports have a more positive body image and experience higher states of psychological well-being than girls and women who do not play sports.

Helping Montanans Achieve Their Dreams

Ever heard the saying *a penny saved is a penny earned*? In the case of the matched savings programs offered across the state, a dollar saved can mean up to six dollars earned. Individuals across Montana are participating in special savings programs that are helping them earn money to achieve goals such as buying a home, starting a business, or furthering their education.

Visit www.montanacreditunions.coop
and click on Matched Savings
Accounts for more information
on these great savings programs.

MCUCD IDA Programs:

— *BSAFE IDA: Survivors of domestic
violence can save for
homeownership, business startup,
or education.*

— *Rural Montana Saves: Save for
costs associated with attending
college, university, vocational
school, technical college,
or job training.*

— *First Time Homebuyer IDA:
Save for first-time homeownership.*

— *Montana Students Save: Save for
costs associated with attending a
Montana college or university
including tuition, fees, and books.*

In the current economy, saving for homeownership, education, or a business is a luxury that is unattainable for many households. Participation in these special savings programs, also known as *Individual Development Accounts* (IDAs) is making it possible for hardworking families and individuals in the state to make their dreams a reality.

Individuals participating in IDA programs are typically young adults, often with children. After opening an IDA at one of the participating credit unions, participants make regular monthly deposits, complete a financial education component, and receive training specific to their goal (such as homebuyer education). Their savings are matched at a rate from two-to-one all the way up to six-to-one, offer-

ing a hand up in achieving the goal and moving toward economic self-sufficiency.

It is amazing what can be achieved with a little help. Sarah, a nursing student in Miles City, offers a great example of how the cooperative spirit of these unique matched savings programs can help change lives. It all began in a meeting with a development counselor at Miles Community College (MCC) when Sarah was told about *Rural Montana Saves*, a matched savings program developed to assist hardworking individuals with costs associated with attending post secondary education or job training.

As a single mom, Sarah was just starting her Associate of Applied Science in nursing at MCC when she enrolled in *Rural Montana Saves*. Sarah was very motivated and managed to reach her savings goal three months early. She also completed the required financial education and was able to begin accessing funds ahead of schedule. She used her savings to pay for her books and other expenses incurred in completing her nursing degree.

With help from the program partners, Sarah was able to complete her nursing degree, find employment, and has since significantly increased the financial security of her family. Using what she learned through RMS, she has already begun saving to make a down payment on a house. The financial education classes have motivated her to save and prepare for the future; she is no longer just focused on the here and now. Because of the IDA program, Sarah believes she will be able to attain a better financial future for her family.

She says, "It has been a blessing to be accepted into this program. My biggest worry in the beginning of returning to

school was, I can't afford four years. This program has provided me with resources to support my education further."

Created in 2003, Montana Credit Unions for Community Development runs programs aimed at improving the

quality of life and financial independence of Montanans. Providing matched savings accounts is just one of MCUCD's four core program areas.

As the charitable arm of the state's trade association for credit unions, Montana Credit Unions for Community Development (MCUCD) focuses on helping its 58 member credit unions improve the lives and financial independence of all Montanans. "We work with our partner credit unions to help Montana families lift themselves out of poverty," said MCUCD Executive Director Jeanne Saarinen, adding that she sees asset-building as one of the key ways to do that.

Along with matched savings accounts, MCUCD addresses the needs through its other core program areas: consumer education, free tax services, and combating predatory lending. The organization was recently honored by the National Credit Union Foundation for its impressive outreach efforts, as its programs have impacted the lives of 50,000 Montanans.

"The IDA program has provided me with organized and useful ways to save money. The budgeting skills and techniques have made it easier and less stressful. The most helpful thing about this program is the continued support of the Student Assistance Foundation counselors at school and credit union staff who provided tips and strategies about saving and spending money."

—An IDA Participant from Great Falls

Laughter, Songs and Friendship

—Susan Luinstra

Thanks to the generous support of the Montana Arts Council, our school saw a dream come true. For many years we'd spoken wistfully of bringing the community together for an old-fashioned dance, a chance for the children to get a sense of local history while experiencing something they'd only read or heard about. Many generations of Bynum students had learned ballroom dancing, thanks to the tradition established by long-time teacher Ira Perkins, but a feeling for how dance had strengthened the community seemed to be missing. When we connected with Hamilton musician Chip Jasmin, everything seemed to fall into place. His knowledge of traditional music and dance, coupled with years of working with school children, provided the

support we needed to get started. Throughout the planning process, Chip's experience guided us in setting reachable goals and opening possibilities. What developed was a weeklong residency filled with song, folk dance, fiddles and laughter, culminating in a community performance and dance.

It seemed like a big undertaking, but gently, with respect and humor, Chip and his son, Cove, introduced the children to songs and dances that were just right for them. With titles as varied as *Dirt Made My Lunch* and *100 Generations*, the students selected their favorite songs and eagerly practiced the movements that would bring them to life on stage. Even those normally reluctant to perform quickly found the needed confidence.

Earlier in the year, the whole school had decided to try violin music. Every student, from second through eighth grade, bravely worked to develop their skills on the challenging instrument, preparing a few tunes to play at the community dance. With the extraordinary touch of an artist, Chip helped the children develop their pieces.

Adding accompaniment and some beautiful new tunes, the fiddle music came to life, energetic and vibrant.

When the big night arrived, the hall was filled to bursting with community and family members ready to support the children in their endeavor. The Jasmins skillfully directed the evening, showcasing the students and their music. When it came time for the dance, it was magical. There were grandpas with granddaughters, moms and sons, neighbors and friends, waltzing and two-stepping their way across the floor. As Chip stepped down from the stage to lead simple square dances, folks of all ages

joined in the fun. The laughter, the songs and the friendship shared lingered long after the floors were swept and the lights shut off.

A residency brings something unique to a community, something that stays when the artist leaves, something that becomes a part

of each of those touched by the experience. We're deeply grateful to the Montana Arts Council for their continued support of the arts in our schools and communities and the affect it has on each one of us.

—This article was gratefully adapted from the State of the Arts Newsletter by the Montana Arts Council. Susan Luinstra is a Supervising Teacher at the Bynum School. She can be reached at sgl@3rivers.net or 406-469-2373.

You needed only to look into the eyes of the children to know that the Bynum School residency with Chip and Cove Jasmin, held last May, was a wondrous success. Delight, enthusiasm and pride shone from young faces, reflected back by the community and family members crowded into the small gym for the annual spring program.

Positive Youth Development Takes Many Forms

It's when:

- *parents collaborate with their children on setting household rules and curfews.*
- *teachers and administrators really listen to students' thoughts and concerns about school life and culture.*
- *business leaders hire young workers and teach them the skills they need to succeed.*
- *community leaders work with young people to build neighborhood drop-in centers or to organize sports leagues.*
- *policymakers invite youth to weigh in on the legislation that affects them and their families.*

For more great information:

The Prevention Resource Center:
www.prevention.mt.gov

The Annie E. Casey Foundation Kids Count Data Center:
center.kidscount.org/ <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/>

America's Promise Alliance:
www.americaspromise.org

FindYouthInfo.gov:
www.findyouthinfo.gov

Youth Build USA:
www.youthbuild.org

The Search Institute:
www.search-institute.org/

Making the Healthy Choice the Easy Choice

—Katie Bark

—A recent report by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation showed that between 25 and 30% of Montana children ages 10 – 17 are overweight or obese.

Lots of focus has been given to improving the nutrition of school meals in recent years, and many schools can be proud of the progress they've made. However, children's food choices at school extend beyond the school meals program. Consider the snacks available in vending machines, at club meetings, student stores, fundraising activities, classroom rewards and other school-based events where food plays a central role. While it may be easier or cheaper to sell candy or to reward students with popular high-calorie, low-nutrient foods or drinks, we can't afford to do this if we want to get serious about health care reform and saving on the cost of health care.

I would like to challenge all those who are involved in stocking vending machines, sports concessions, fundraisers, student clubs or stores and other school events to increase the presence of healthful foods in these venues. Such a shift from non-nutritious options to healthful options supports students' health, growth and academic potential. For those groups seeking profits, the good news is that healthy foods *sell*. As many Montana school districts have already found out, kids will buy what's available and there is a profit to be made with healthy foods.

As a community and as a nation, we need to take stronger steps to ensure that making the healthy choice is the easy choice. A Bill currently before Congress proposes an adjustment in nutrition standards in schools. Rather than only having nutrition standards for the foods provided through the school meals program, this Bill proposes nutrition standards for *all* foods available within the school environment. This proposition makes sense for children's wellbeing and is supported by:

1. educators who acknowledge the importance of nutrient-rich foods in a child's academic performance;
2. health care professionals who have great concern for the childhood obesity rates in America and the chronic diseases associated with obesity; and

3. parents striving for the best health and academic outcomes for their children.

Some will argue that this step will take school district control of food sales away. It won't. It will work just as national standards have worked in school nutrition programs for years. School nutrition program managers can attest to the fact that they have flexibility and can make the final decisions on what they want to serve on their menus while still meeting nutrition standards.

The time has come to support our children in their ability to access healthy foods throughout the school day. Many program enhancements have already taken place in the school meals program, which has begun to include more homemade and healthful meals, including a preference for local foods. School and community partners are implementing farm-to-school programs and school fundraisers that support the sale of healthful Montana foods from local producers. Edible school yards are becoming a reality through school gardens, greenhouses and fruit orchards.

If we are really serious about health care reform, we must surround children with healthy foods at home, at school and throughout the community, we must offer them the opportunity to make healthful choices and limit extra calorie, low nutrient foods. In focus groups, Montana teens have voiced their opinion that if we really want to support them in making healthy choices, we need to limit access to unhealthy foods and educate them on healthier choices. By offering healthful foods, we provide a consistent nutritional message to children that we value their health more than the dollar. Are you up for the challenge to help make the healthy choice the *easy* choice for kids?

—Katie Bark, registered dietitian, from Bozeman, is the co-Public Policy Coordinator for the Montana Dietetic Association. She can be reached at barksnmt@imt.net.

TV Food Advertising Increases Snacking and Weight Gain

In a series of experimental studies, Rudd Center researchers found that food advertising on television increases automatic snacking on available foods among children and adults. The research appears in the July issue of the journal Health Psychology, published by the American Psychological Association.

"This research shows a direct and powerful link between television food advertising and calories consumed by adults and children," said lead author Jennifer Harris, PhD, Rudd Center Director of Marketing Initiatives. "Food advertising triggers automatic eating, regardless of hunger, and is a significant contributor to the obesity epidemic. Reducing unhealthy food advertising to children is critical."

*For more information:
www.yaleruddcenter.org*

Personal Credo

—Mark Genito

The story of my life, one day, may be divided into chapters like a novel. If I'm lucky, it might even be interesting enough for someone to want to read. However, I would imagine that most of it would sound pretty common. There may be a chapter titled *Awkward High School Stage* and another titled *College Bound*. Maybe someday there will be a chapter titled *Marriage* or even *My Firstborn* . . . not exactly groundbreaking material for a page-turner.

Typically, every good story has a plot twist or turning point where readers begin to think that maybe it's not the same old story they've heard a thousand times before. That chapter for me thus far in the novel of my life would be titled *The Rejuvenation of Mud and Soul*. It would start with me in my Jeep, a stack of papers with times and places to be, and a trunk full of camera equipment. I would be driving a hundred miles a day around Monroe County in Northeastern Pennsylvania, shooting photo assignments for a small newspaper nobody read. It would go on to explain my demeanor . . . dejected, tired, unmotivated . . . and easily irritated. It would describe in vivid detail the way I slept late into the afternoon and ate cereal for dinner. It would number the total of close friends I had: three.

And it would illustrate how at the ripe age of 24 I was already jaded by my career choice and unfulfilling lifestyle. The chapter would conclude with a 25-year-old version of myself, wearing a tattered and faded pair of Carhart pants and a dreadfully worn in green t-shirt, standing in a drafty and stale trailer near the highway, a sheet of plastic in my hand, a cold window in front of me and a warm feeling in my heart.

I'm a crew leader in the Montana Conservation Corps, the tattered Carharts and shirt is my uniform, distressed from over 2,000 hours of National Service volunteering. The trailer belongs to a low-income resident of the community I belong to and am a part of. And the plastic in my hand is

the remedy for the cold window, weatherizing the home and helping the family that lives in it to save money and stay warmer in the face of the cold Montana winter to come. Lastly, the warm feeling in my heart is the result of a life change that spanned the length of the country and turned my world on its head.

Somewhere in the deep and pristine wilderness of the great West, thousands of miles away from anything and anyone familiar, I scratched a hole in the Earth and my soul began to renew. I quit my job as a photographer, abandoned most of my belongings, and drove across the country. The hole I was digging was to function as a drain for water on a trail; it was my first day of trail work as a member of the Montana Conservation Corps. I began writing a new chapter in my life, one that involved me getting dirty, the kind of dirty that acts as proof of the hard work accomplished

And despite my unfamiliarity with everything and everyone around me, I felt more like myself than ever before in my life. The reason

for it, was the fulfillment I received from serving others and the environment, instead of only serving myself; and to share in that service with the likeminded people around me.

I believe the only certain happiness in life is to live for others. This idea of contentment through service is one of the many things I learned during this epic chapter of my life. And it is the one thing I hope above all, remains a driving theme in every chapter in my life still to be written.

—Mark Genito is an alumni of the Montana Conservation Corps. He served two years with MCC and now works for the US Forest Service. This story is gratefully reprinted from the *Serve Montana Stories of Service* page. For more information on how you can serve Montana, visit www.serve.mt.gov.

"Life's most persistent and urgent question is: what are you doing for others?"

—Martin Luther King, Jr.

United We Serve

United We Serve is a nationwide service initiative that will help meet growing social needs resulting from the economic downturn. With the knowledge that ordinary people can achieve extraordinary things when given the proper tools, President Obama is asking Americans to come together to help lay a new foundation for growth. This initiative aims to expand the impact of existing organizations by engaging new volunteers in their work and by encouraging volunteers to develop their own projects.

Want to help?

— *The Governor's Office of Community Service offers a wide variety of resources and projects that are strengthening Montana. Go to <http://serve.mt.gov/> to learn more.*

— *Go to <http://www.serve.gov> to find a volunteer opportunity near you. Simply plug in your zip code, city or state and a list of current opportunities complete with contact information pops up.*

National Recommended Practices for Serving LGBT Homeless Youth

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth are overrepresented in the homeless population. Research indicates that each year, hundreds of thousands of LGBT youth will experience homelessness. Reports also indicate that while living on the streets, LGBT youth are at great risk of physical and sexual exploitation. Without access to residential stability, nurturance, and opportunities for positive youth development, homeless LGBT youth are particularly susceptible to the challenges of life on the streets. As adults, they are also at great risk of entering the juvenile or criminal justice system.

Whether shelter, housing, drop-in services, case management services, or street outreach, it is important that inclusive and culturally competent services are offered to enable LGBT homeless youth to stabilize their lives. Despite the stigma and violence that many LGBT youth experience, they often demonstrate remarkable courage and resilience.

*Source: National Alliance to End Homelessness:
[http://www.endhomelessness.org/
content/general/detail/2239](http://www.endhomelessness.org/content/general/detail/2239)*

Note: The recommendations contained in this guide provide direction to agencies and nonprofit organizations to increase their competency in working with LGBT youth.

Canaries in the Gold Mine

—Josh Hemsath

I was nine years old in 1994. One of my birthday presents was getting glasses. The other was moving to Alaska. I was a kid who liked reading but had no interest in Little League. I soon learned that I didn't fit the rough-and-tumble norms of the Alaskan community where I found myself living. I kept to myself, clinging tightly to a secret. Then, at age 14, I was abruptly forced out of the closet. It was a huge drama, with everyone in school approaching me about being outed. Just when I thought things couldn't get worse, the Vice Principal sent for me. I was terrified as I walked up that hallway. I didn't know what I had done wrong, or what kind of trouble I was in. But when I got there, she let me know that if I ever, in any way, felt unsafe, I was to let her or one of my teachers know immediately. In that moment, I went from feeling completely alone to knowing I had the full support of the school's leaders.

Later, in high school, a security guard sent for me. He was clearly uncomfortable, shifting his weight from foot to foot, looking everywhere but at me. He finally cut to the chase. "We've heard that threats have been made against you. If you ever feel unsafe, let us know. Didn't feel like you have to handle this by yourself." It made a huge difference for me.

Public schools (K–12) are hetero-normative environments, where people are considered to fall into one of two distinct genders. Gender identity and gender roles are linked and consistent with biological gender. Unfortunately, these attitudes can marginalize and stigmatize people who are not heterosexual, particularly in a peer-based environment where everyone is struggling to fit in, figure out who they are and come to terms with complex, rapid physiological and social changes.

For adolescents, social acceptance is an important predictor of self-esteem. The peer network is generally comprised of well-defined cliques; belonging to one group or another is one way to demonstrate identity. When someone clearly does not fit in, whether because of gender identity, sexual orientation or another factor, it can lead to bullying and harassment. This can be especially common in rural or frontier

areas where youth are isolated to begin with, but even more so when they are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Transgendered (LGBT).

The correlations between mental health, bullying and harassment among LGBT youth are strong. This makes it crucially important to expand the concept of safe schools to include anti-bullying and anti-harassment policies designed to protect all youth who do not fit the mold. Protected classes must be added to guide anti-bullying protocols, and should include sexual identity and orientation as well as religion, nationality, race, ethnicity, age and other characteristics that may be seen as "outside the norm."

Anti-bullying and anti-harassment policies can be very basic, but should mandate that schools provide measures for tracking and reporting bias-related incidents. Most instructors and administrators say that they want a safe learning space for kids, but kids themselves are good "canaries in the coal mine" for standards set by their friends and adult role models. If adult role models exhibit discomfort with differences, youth will reflect that discomfort. That will be expressed in behaviors that stigmatize and isolate those who are different.

In the past several years, I've had opportunities to sit on panels with adults who grew up in Montana schools. Some stated that they were not the victims of harassment, but had initiated anti-gay violence with the intent of drawing attention away from themselves. This kind of behavior often goes hand-in-hand with depression, low self-esteem and isolation. Isolation and self-condemnation can lead to a variety of teen risk behaviors, including drug and alcohol use and school drop-out. The consequences of these behaviors can haunt people all the way through school and into their adult lives. This means that it is imperative to provide systems where people feel safe to be themselves.

A majority of literature suggests that a holistic prevention plan is a school's best bet for protecting kids from bullying and harassment. Faculty members who are provided with resources to help them show

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Canaries in the Gold Mine

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support and educate students can protect vulnerable student populations. Administrators must provide safety and encouragement for peer support groups.

Walking this walk is difficult, particularly in communities where alternative lifestyles are uncommon, yet offering kids opportunities to self explore in a supportive atmosphere yields huge benefits for the individual, the school and the community.

If I had one piece of advice for those who have the power and authority to deliver and enforce supportive environments, it would be to *grow a backbone*. Publicly supporting students who do not fit a community's vision of "normal" can be painful. Even so, it is up to parents, teachers, administrators and those same community leaders to do what is right for all students.

When leaders get tangled up in enforcing narrowly defined, rigid standards of *what is right*, it shapes the community. Sud-

denly it isn't about what is best for students, it's about enforcing norms. Living up to moral imperatives is completely different. It means doing what is right, whether comfortable or not. It means teaching by example that hate crimes are unacceptable and that bullying will not be tolerated.

There is something to be said for being a student from a large school district. I benefitted because sexual orientation was already included in anti-bullying, anti-discrimination policies. This may be surprising because supporting queer individuals seems to run counter to the rural cultures found in Alaska and Montana. Even though people can be kind and accommodating, there remain unspoken rules that undermine privacy and prevent disclosure, keep people from seeking help and from feeling safe enough to acknowledge who they are. This is especially true in a climate where antigay or derogatory remarks about people outside the heteronormative culture are commonplace and ugly.

Schools need institutional resources

that can help them initiate, encourage, and engage peer support groups in the school environment. It is imperative to live by the *do no harm* principle. Do things the right way. Don't tiptoe around these issues if you really want to make a difference: it is difficult to publicly counter what you may perceive as community norms, yet to sit quietly is to enable a bullying environment and harassment culture with queer identity at the center of the ring. This violates the oath incumbent on all of us: to keep our students safe in our schools and in our communities.

—Josh Hemsath is completing his last semester at Montana State University in the Community Health program. He is a passionate coalition builder, having served with the Governor's task force on Methamphetamine abuse from 2008-09 and the Montana LGBT community for five years. He looks forward to helping address long-standing social problems upon graduation.

Survey Finds Nearly 9 out of 10 LGBT Students Experience Harassment

GLSEN, the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, released the *2007 National School Climate Survey*, a comprehensive report on the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) students. The survey of 6,209 middle and high school students found that almost nine out of ten LGBT students (86.2%) experienced harassment at school in the past year, three-fifths (60.8%) felt unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation and about a third (32.7%) skipped a day of school in the past month because of feeling unsafe. This biennial survey is the only national survey to document the experiences of students who identify as LGBT in America's secondary schools. The 2007 survey included responses from all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

Students in schools with Gay-Straight Alliances reported hearing fewer homophobic remarks, experienced less harassment and assault because of their sexual orientation and gender expression, were more likely to report incidents of harassment and assault to school staff, were less likely to feel unsafe because of their sexual

orientation or gender expression, were less likely to miss school because of safety concerns and reported a greater sense of belonging to their school community.

The presence of supportive staff contributed to a range of positive indicators including fewer reports of missing school, greater academic achievement, higher educational aspirations and a greater sense of belonging to their school community. Only 11 states and the District of Columbia protect students from bullying and harassment based on sexual orientation, and only seven states and DC protect students on the basis of gender identity/expression. The report found that having a generic law that did not include specific categories was essentially as effective for LGBT students as having no law at all.

GLSEN, the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, is the leading national education organization focused on ensuring safe schools for all students. For more information visit www.glsen.org.

A hostile school climate and the effects on academic achievement:

- 86.2% of LGBT students reported being verbally harassed, 44.1 percent reported being physically harassed and 22.1 percent reported being physically assaulted at school in the past year because of their sexual orientation.
- 73.6% heard derogatory remarks such as "faggot" or "dyke" frequently or often at school.
- More than half (60.8%) reported that they felt unsafe in school because of their sexual orientation, and more than a third (38.4%) felt unsafe because of their gender expression.
- The reported grade point average of student who were more frequently harassed because of their sexual orientation or gender expression was almost half a grade lower than for students who were less often harassed (2.8 versus 2.4).

For more information or to read the entire report, go to www.glsen.org.

Tips for Preventing or Managing the Influenza

1. Get your children vaccinated for seasonal influenza and 2009 H1N1 influenza. Parents and caregivers of children less than 6 months of age should also get vaccinated for seasonal influenza and 2009 H1N1 influenza because these children are at higher risk for influenza complications and are too young to be vaccinated.
2. Stay home if you or your child is sick.
3. Remain home for at least 24 hours after a fever abates. Signs of a fever can include chills, feeling very warm to the touch, a flushed appearance or sweating.
4. Teach your children to cover their mouths and noses with tissue when they cough or sneeze. If they don't have tissue, teach them to cough or sneeze into their elbows or shoulders, not into their hands.
5. Practice good hand hygiene by washing hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing. If soap and water are not available, alcohol-based hand rubs are useful.
6. Update your emergency contact lists.
7. Collect games, books, DVDs and other items to keep your family entertained in case early childhood programs are closed, school is dismissed or your child becomes ill and must stay home.
8. Make alternative child care plans in case your child gets sick, your early childhood program closes or school is dismissed because of the influenza.
9. Monitor your children's health by checking for fever and other influenza symptoms.

If you have children who are at higher risk of serious disease from the influenza, talk to your healthcare provider about a plan to protect them. Children at higher risk of serious disease from the influenza include those under age five and those with certain chronic medical conditions, such as asthma, heart disease and diabetes.

Just Ask Anna

Dear Anna:

My 2 year-old has been at two daycares in the last few months and neither of them has known very much about the H1N1 virus. What are you doing to ensure that daycares are aware of H1N1 and are taking steps to prevent the spread of infection?

Sincerely,
A Concerned Mom

Dear Concerned Mom:

Thank you for writing to me. With the spread of the 2009 H1N1 virus, the Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) has been working hard to control outbreaks. Our Public Health and Safety Division has led the Department's effort to educate people about healthy habits and preventing illness. This past fall, the Department distributed information, tools and guidance to licensed child care providers throughout the state. Local and tribal health departments have also worked diligently with schools, day cares, and businesses to educate people about the H1N1 virus and vaccinations.

Included in our efforts to inform daycares and parents about precautions they can take against illness, we have a pair of public service announcements now playing on radio and television in Montana that promotes influenza prevention and underline the importance of getting the H1N1 vaccine. A statewide hotline has been established that directs callers to their local health department for information about nearby vaccination clinics. A caller can dial in toll free to 1-877-701-8555 to reach a recorded message from the local health department regarding information about vaccine availability. People can also learn about vaccination clinics being offered statewide by going to the DPHHS website at www.dphhs.mt.gov.

The 2009 H1N1 influenza virus causes the same symptoms as seasonal influenza, but it is a new virus causing illness in Montana. Influenza viruses change from year to year, so vaccines for seasonal influenza change from year to year. The 2009 H1N1 virus emerged after the seasonal vaccine was formulated. Most people have little or no immunity to the new H1N1 influenza,

so a new vaccine was formulated to specifically protect people from the disease. Immunization is the first and best defense against a influenza virus. This new vaccine was first offered to those who are most at risk for infection, including pregnant women and young children.

I have been encouraging parents to have their children vaccinated, because the H1N1 influenza has been a bigger threat to children and young adults than the adult population.

The vaccine supply is now sufficient to allow every Montanan who wants one to get an H1N1 vaccination. In addition to children and young

adults, people most at risk for complications are individuals who are pregnant or have chronic conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, asthma, or other conditions that reduce immunity to influenza. Other groups that are at higher risk of infection or likely to spread influenza viruses to vulnerable populations include health care workers and caregivers for children aged six months and younger.

Children and youth from 6 months of age through 18 years are at higher risk because they are typically in close contact with one another. This increases the likelihood that the disease will spread. Young adults aged 19–24 also live, work and study in close proximity to one another, and have the added risk of being highly mobile.

Like other influenza viruses, the 2009 H1N1 spreads from person to person through coughing, sneezing, and sometimes through touching contaminated objects. Signs of H1N1 can include fever, headache, fatigue, dry cough, runny or stuffy nose, muscle aches and sore throat. Most people feel better within a week, but influenza infection can lead to other serious illnesses such as pneumonia. Health officials strongly recommend that people continue to take steps to prevent infection. Those steps include covering coughs and sneezes, frequent hand washing and staying home when sick. For more information call the DPHHS Immunization Section at 406-444-5580.

There is no cost for the H1N1 vaccine. At this point, nearly 350,000 doses of the H1N1 vaccine have been delivered to Montana since October.

On Strengthening Montana

—Governor Brian Schweitzer

—“I want Montana students to be challenged and excited about learning. And it is absolutely essential that students have a solid foundation in math and science to compete in a global world.”

—Governor Brian Schweitzer

The First Lady, Nancy Schweitzer, and I share a joint interest in science: I am a soil scientist and Nancy is a botanist. Together we want to help students discover the wonders of science. The *Governor and First Lady's Math and Science Initiative* invites Montana's youth to discover the many opportunities available to learn about science and math,

not only in our K-12 schools, but through higher education. We want to encourage students to find out about careers in science and to explore Montana's splendid surroundings.

Montana has good students who, with the help of great teachers, will go on to become top innovators, scientists and engineers in a global workforce. The purpose of the Math and Science Initiative is to promote education and careers in math and science. This means starting as soon as possible, with early childhood programs that spark children's interest in science. We are encouraging K-12 classrooms to observe innovative teaching practices and to promote the kind of hands-on learning that will encourage inquisitive young minds to take challenging courses. Ultimately, this will lead students to Montana's universities where they can engage in innovative research and learn about career opportunities. We would like to see private researchers in partnership with schools, partnerships with Montana scientists and businesses, and the kind of strong community interfaces that will allow for sharing resources through field trips, materials and hands-on experiences.

Why science and math? We believe that our country is at a vitally important point in history. Though we have a rich history of innovation, nationally, we have been facing declining proficiencies in science, engineering, and technology. According to



the 2000 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), just 18 percent of high school seniors in our nation were considered proficient in science; other sources say that just 15 percent of current college undergraduates will earn degrees in science and engineering. Naturally, that creates a significant workforce shortage in those fields. We want Montana's young people to have the skills they need to compete for the kind of jobs and careers that will mark the 21st Century.

The theme of this issue of the *Prevention Connection* is positive youth development. To my mind, the result of any program or initiative that promotes youth development must include opportunities to develop the kind of competence that will foster self sufficiency, self determination and belief in the future. The *Governor and First Lady's Math and Science Initiative* can help with that. For more information and a wealth of resources, visit: www.mathscience.mt.gov.

Savings Program Helps Rural People

The Rural Montana Saves program is a special matched savings program that helps families with limited incomes save for college or job training.

- The program will match \$3 for every \$1 people save.
- Participants become a member of their local credit union and learn how to manage their money.
- They get help figuring out their job and educational goals.
- All the money participants save will help pay for their school books, supplies or tuition.

Rural Montana Saves can provide up to \$2,400 towards schooling. To learn more about Rural Montana Saves and the qualifications for the program please visit www.montanacreditunions.coop.

Contact Rural Employment Opportunities (REO) with questions or for an application at 1-800-546-1140 or email rmsinfo@reomontana.org.

Rural Montana Saves is project of Rural Employment Opportunities, Montana Credit Union Network for Community Development, Student Assistance Foundation, Montana State Extension Services and has been funded by the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services.

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The Last Word: *Essentials of Positive Youth Development*

—Joan Cassidy

Positive Youth Development, in essence, means the organic process through which youth meet their personal and social needs to feel safe, cared for, valued, useful and spiritually grounded. This allows them to go on to build the skills they need to function and to contribute.

A report by the *National Research Council on Community Programs to Promote Youth Development* provides a comprehensive overview of what researchers have learned about adolescent development and the assets that support their immediate and continued well being. Following is a summary of the features and characteristics of environments and staff that will promote optimum growth.

— **Physical and psychological safety** comes about in safe, health-promoting facilities where safe peer group interactions are the expectation.

- **Appropriate Structure** includes clear, consistent boundaries, rules and expectations, predictability and age-appropriate monitoring.
- **Supportive relationships** offer warmth, connectedness, good communication, support, guidance and secure attachments.
- **Opportunities to belong** include meaningful inclusion, regardless of gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation or ability level. Social inclusion, engagement and integration provide healthy opportunities for identity formation and support social competence.
- **Positive social norms** include rules, expectations, values, morals and the obligation to give back to the community.
- **Support for efficacy and mattering** offers practices that support empowerment and autonomy, ways to make a difference in the community, and being taken seriously.

— Opportunities to build skills help develop includes intentional exposure to learning experiences that build physical, intellectual, psychological, emotional and social skills.

— **Integration of family, school and community efforts** creates a synergy across environments, and consistency in world view.

The more we learn about the positive youth development, the clearer it becomes that prevention is science rather than art. Drs. Richard Catalano and David Hawkins, the Search Institute's 40 Developmental Assets and others have created frameworks that can be used to empower communities to create healthy environments that support and nurture healthy youth. And ultimately, that is what prevention is all about.

For more information, refer to: *Community Programs to Promote Youth Development, Report Brief*, 2004. Institute of Medicine National Research Council of the National Academies. [tp://www.bocvf.org/youth_development_brief.pdf](http://www.bocvf.org/youth_development_brief.pdf) www.bocvf.org/youth_development_brief.pdf

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